Wrought Iron Work for the Brooklyn Diocesan Seminary of the Immaculate Conception at Huntington, L.I. by the Ferro Studio · Inc ·

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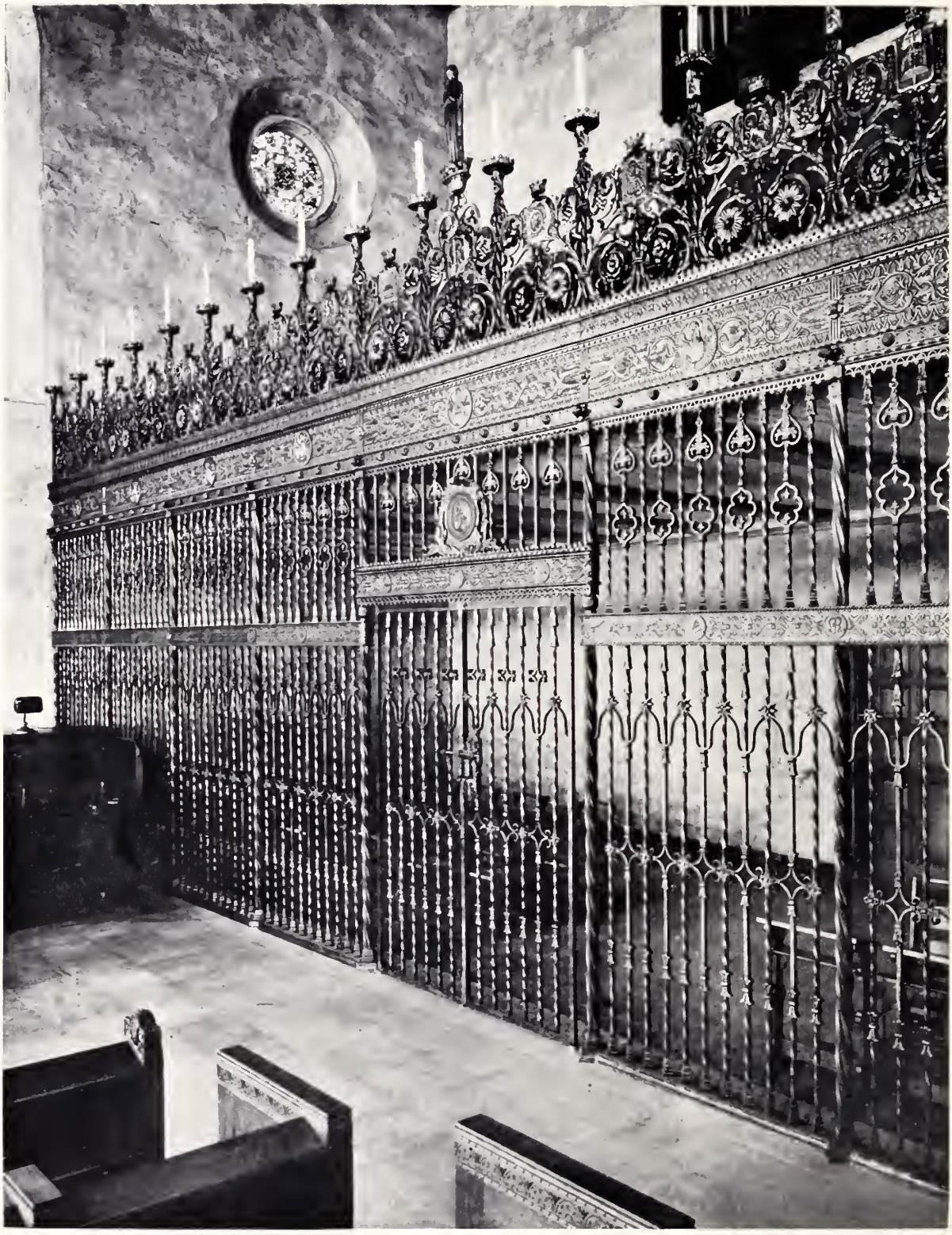
WROUGHT IRON WORK
FOR THE
BROOKLYN DIOCESAN SEMINARY
OF THE
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
BY THE
FERRO STUDIO, *Inc.*

THE MONOGRAPH SERIES
OF ARCHITECTURE AND THE
ALLIED ARTS

The FERRO STUDIO, *Inc.*
228 East 150th Street
New York



A View of the Choral Grille

FOREWORD

THIS monograph commemorates work done for the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception at Huntington, Long Island. It was a high privilege to collaborate with the architect in designing this work; to forge it was a labor of love. There went into its making, at all events, what a prominent architect has called "the sacrificial factor of laborious craftsmanship." Future generations will have time to judge of its perfection and artistic value.

The Law of Moses prescribed for sacrifice victims without spot or blemish. Christian sentiment, likewise, calls for genuineness in the materials and perfection in the craftsmanship of all the elements that contribute to the structure of the House of God. Iron or wood or granite or marble or gold can be transmuted into forms of beauty by artistic skill and, when so treated, manifest to us the glory of God, for they show us what man's divine endowment of mind and heart can do and they bring before us manifold reminders of the infinite and changeless beauty of Him who is eternal.

There is at the present time a general awakening of interest in church architecture; a recognition that much of the architecture of the past generation was poor, and a demand for better efforts in the future. It cannot but be lamented that really fine ecclesiastical concepts are being wasted on buildings entirely commercial, while garments of shoddy suffice for the church, the fruitful mother of many arts. It is not that we are lacking in knowledge and skill, but rather in the faith and devotion and feeling of spiritual beauty that possessed the sincere and humble souls of Medieval workmen.

If the work this booklet pictures demonstrates how an unpretentious metal like iron can be put to the service of religion and beauty, the craftsmen who wrought it will be amply rewarded.

New York, September, 1930. FREDERICK W. BERGMUELLER

Detail of the Central Portion of the Choral Grille

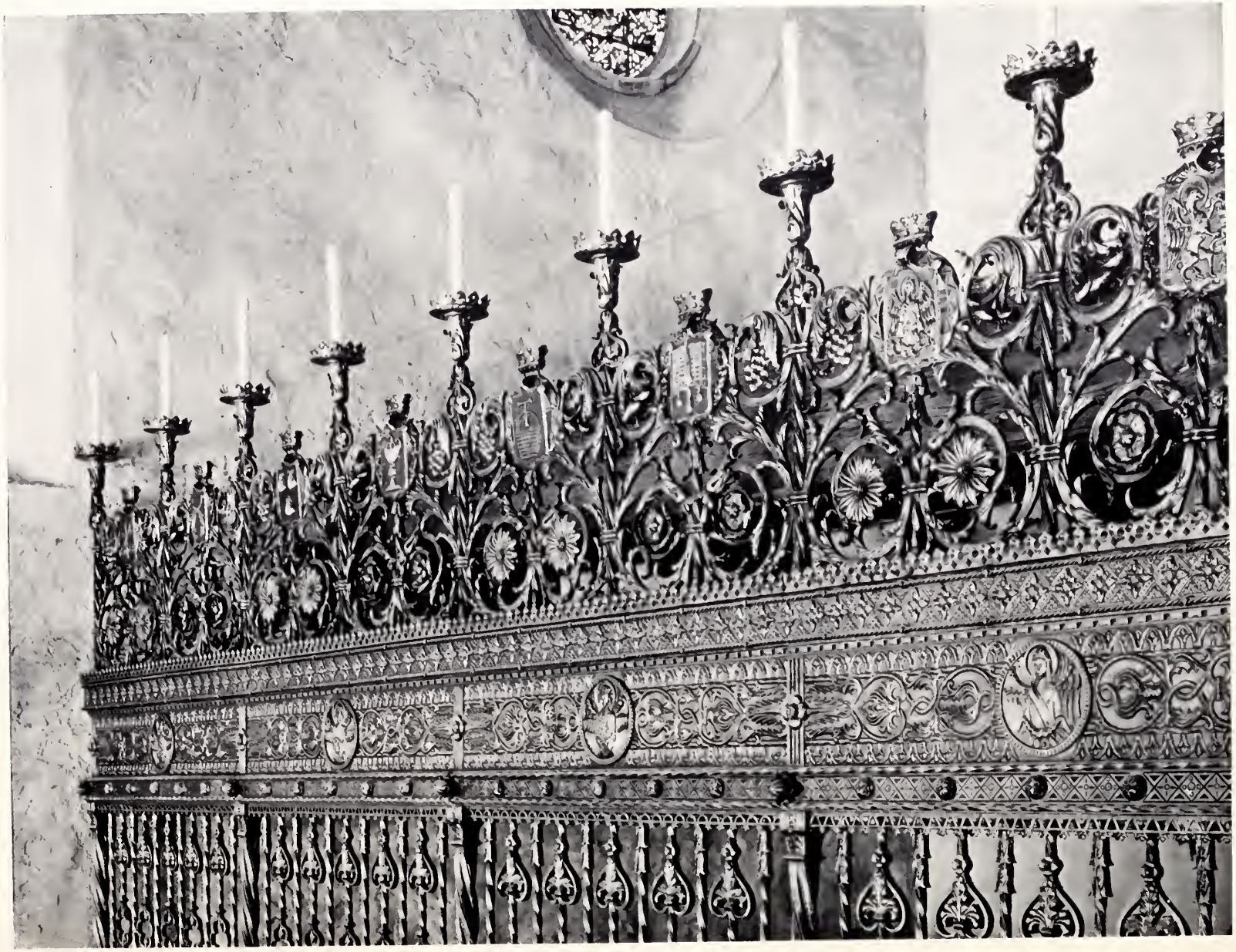
WROUGHT IRON WORK *for the* BROOKLYN DIOCESAN SEMINARY *by the* FERRO STUDIO, *Inc.*

By Eugene Clute

THE best traditions of craftsmanship in wrought iron are well exemplified in the choral screen in the main chapel, the grilles that screen the small chapels in the crypt and the many other beautiful and spirited works which have just been completed by the Ferro Studio, Inc., for the Brooklyn Diocesan Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, at Rosemary Park, Lloyd Harbor, Long Island, N. Y., of which Robert J. Reiley was the architect. This fine seminary stands in one of the most beautiful sections of the quiet country side—an ideal location for a seminary and an admirable setting for such a building as this with its spreading wings, its roofs of red Spanish tile seen among the trees and its dominant central tower surmounted by a great cross that gleams golden in the sunlight.

This building was erected at a cost of more than two and one-half million dollars with a fund raised under the inspiring leadership of the Right Reverend Thomas E. Molloy, Bishop of Brooklyn, and the priests of the

General View of the Seminary



Detail of the Ornamental Crowning Feature of the Choral Grille

diocese, through the devotion of the people. The supervision of the plans and of the construction of the building was entrusted to Monsignor James T. Kelty, to whose untiring efforts the successful consummation of the project was largely due.

The Choral Grille in the Main Chapel

Chief among these works in wrought iron is the great choral screen in the main chapel. It is forty-three feet, six inches wide and fourteen feet, six inches in height and extends entirely across the chapel near the end opposite to the sanctuary. This screen separates the choir or main part of the chapel, which is reserved for the seminarians, from the space at the rear to which others are admitted.

Back of the deep frieze of this screen, is the floor of the choir balcony, which extends across the rear of the chapel. The ornamental cresting of this screen serves in lieu of a railing along the front of the balcony.

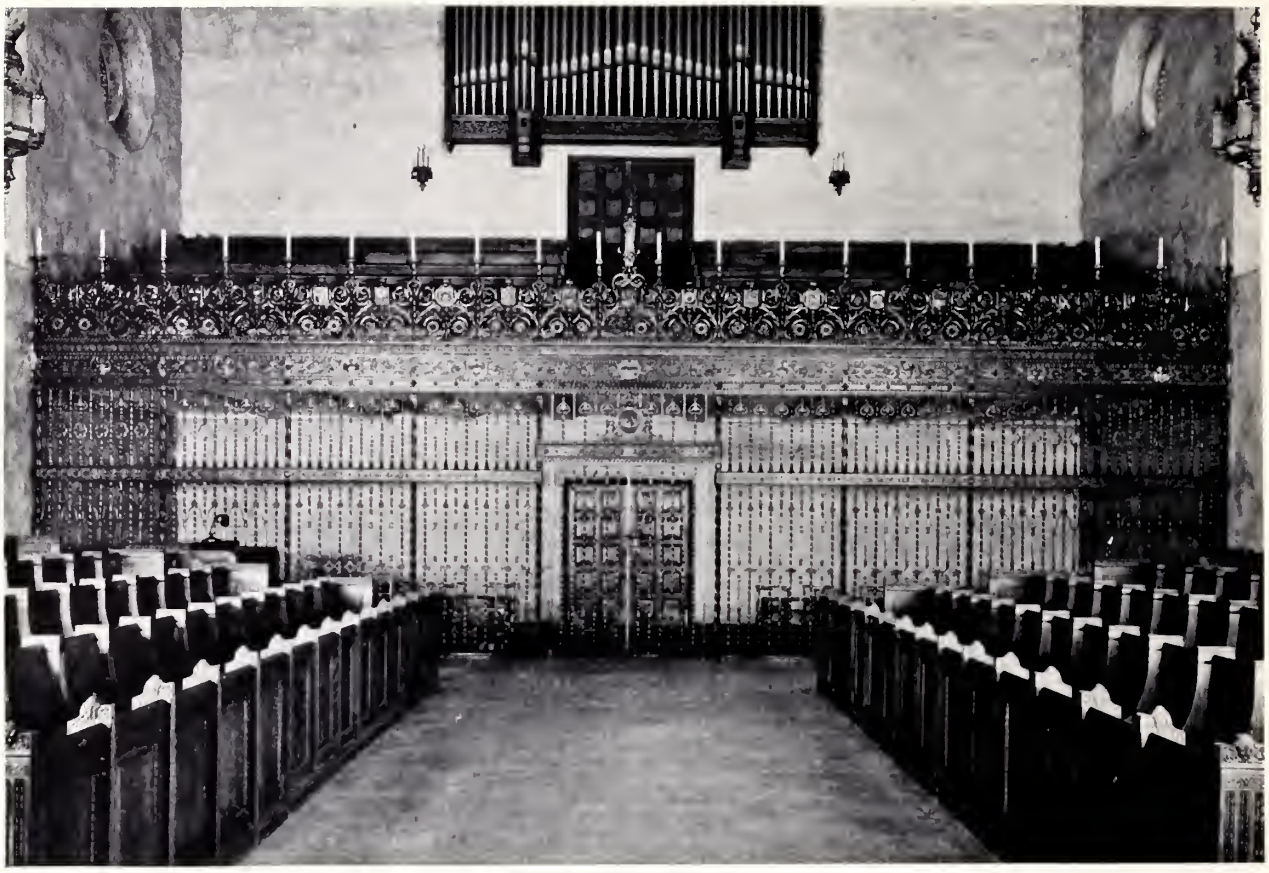
In its purpose this choral grille is similar to the *reja*, or ornamental screen that divides transversely some of the great old Spanish cathedrals, separating the choir from the nave of the cathedral, and in its design it is of Spanish Romanesque inspiration, in keeping with the style of architecture of the chapel of which it forms a part.

This screen is divided into eight wide panels and a central gateway by stout posts forged from bars of wrought iron two inches square, which are ornamented with sinkages and twisted. These posts extend in a single piece from the base to the top of the screen proper and are square where they pass through the horizontal structural member back of the frieze. Before the bars were twisted, the corners were ground off and a V-shaped sinkage was made the entire length of each corner, with a chisel used while the iron was red hot. In a similar manner, a half-round sinkage was made throughout the length of each of the four faces of the bar. When the bar was twisted, these sinkages produced the effect which can be seen in the photographs reproduced herewith, the depressions being marked by shadows and the edges by lines of high-light that lend life and interest.

Candelabrum in the Crypt

About six feet above the floor, a horizontal dividing band six inches deep extends from the gateway to the wall at either side, giving rigidity to the screen. It is ornamented in repoussé. This band is carried around the posts of the gateway, a manner of treatment which is much more agreeable than the usual abrupt termination of such members. Above the gate is a transom band, ornamented in repoussé, which is carried around the posts in a similar manner.

At some distance below the horizontal dividing band, the screen is further stiffened by branches that spring from alternate upright bars and terminate at the intermediate



General View Showing the Choral Grille

bars in star-like ornaments that are varied in design. This forms a wave line of braces that gives rigidity without obstructing the view through the screen at this level and without destroying the lightness of effect or injuring the composition of the screen, as a horizontal dividing member would if placed here.

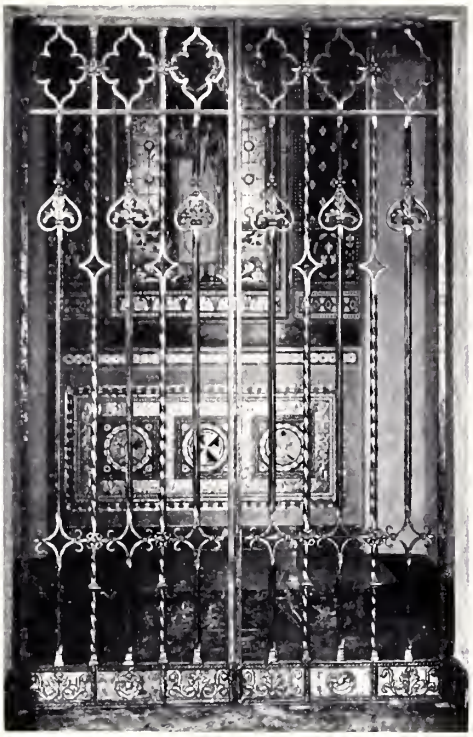
The bars between the posts are enriched with ornament all of which is hand forged and welded together, including the leaf-forms which are welded into the bars.

The thoroughness and thoughtfulness with which every part of the work has been carried out is shown by the manner in which the star-like ornaments, already mentioned, are attached to the bars. These ornaments are affixed to opposite sides of the bars with rivets which pass through their centers and through the bars. Upon one side is the rivet head and upon the other is a washer that is shaped like the rivet head. After the riveting was done, these were finished with ornamental sinkages like those upon the rivet heads. Furthermore, the sinkages are varied in design—a cross, a circle and a diamond.

The gates in the center of the screen are strong but light, for the frame of each gate is forged in a single piece from bars "upset", to gain thickness in the corners, and welded together. This rigid construction permits the use of meeting stiles only one half the thickness of the hanging stiles with an astragal on each, so that the frames have the same appearance of weight all around, and the usual double width of iron in the center,

where the gates meet, is avoided. These gates swing silently at the lightest touch of the hand, for they turn on pivots that rest upon steel balls in bronze sockets set in the marble floor. The lock is of finely forged iron and its design and workmanship are worthy of a museum piece.

Whether it is viewed from a distance, when its silhouette and the pattern formed by the larger masses of the ornamentation count effectively, or examined close at hand, when its finer details can be enjoyed and its exquisite workmanship appreciated, this screen is beautiful and satisfying. It is vibrant and it gives the impression of combined lightness and strength, as wrought iron work should. In its every part it bears witness that it is a work of devotion as well as a work of art. This screen was presented to the Seminary by Mrs. John Walters, Sr., as a memorial to William Whitney Walters.



Grille of One of the End Chapels

The Symbolism in the Choral Grille

Surmounting the cresting in the center of the

General View in the Crypt

choral screen, is a standing figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary emblematic of the Immaculate Conception. The deep reverence and consummate craftsmanship with which this figure has been wrought in iron gives evidence of a true appreciation of the sublimity and spiritual significance of the subject. The figure is two feet in height and is hammered from iron in repoussé. The two parts are welded together at the sides.

In the center of the ornamental cresting is the monogram of the Blessed Virgin Mary at either side of which are nine cartouches which bear designs emblematic of the twelve Apostles, the four Evangelists and of the great theologian St. Thomas Aquinas, and the great philosopher St. Catherine of Alexandria. These eighteen emblems, reading from left to right, represent the following: St. Peter; St. Andrew; St. James; St. John; St. Philip; St. Bartholomew; St. Matthew, the Evangelist; St. Mark, the Evangelist, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Catherine of Alexandria; St. John, the Evangelist; St. Luke, the Evangelist; St. Mathias; St. Simon; St. Thaddeus; St. James, the Less; St. Matthew and St. Thomas.

Grille of the Chapel of St. Charles Borromeo

Grille of the Chapel of St. Therese of Lisieux

In the frieze of the screen, the Nine Choirs of Angels are emblematically represented, reading from left to right, as follows: Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Seraphim, Thrones, Cherubim, Principalities, Archangels and Angels.

Upon the horizontal dividing band, from the wall at the left to the gateway are nine emblematic designs, five upon the posts and four at the centers of the intervening spaces. The three designs at the left are emblematic of the Holy Trinity, the three next at the right are emblematic of Our Savior, while the three nearest to the center of the screen

One of the Candelabra Beautifully Wrought in Repoussé

The Main Staircase Leading to the Chapel

are emblematic of the Blessed Mother. These designs are repeated, in reverse order, upon the band to the right of the gate. The same symbols appear upon the opposite side of this band.

The lintel of the gateway bears, upon the side facing the altar, three medallions, in repoussé, set in the band of ornament. In the central medallion is represented the Blessing Hand of God the Father, back of which are seen three arms of a Maltese cross, the whole enclosed in three circular sinkages. The medallion at the left shows a Lamb, emblematic of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, resting upon the Book with the Seven Seals. The medallion upon the right bears an ascending Dove, emblematic of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

Upon the transom above the gateway, wrought in repoussé, is the Seal of the Diocese of Brooklyn, surrounded by mystic roses and a wreath.

The bolt that fastens the gates slides through dragon-head grotesques and is locked with a hasp upon which is the figure of a seated angel, with a book resting upon his knees. Over the key-hole is the Monogram of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

As one approaches the screen from the entrance at the rear of the chapel, one sees, in repoussé, over the gateway the inscription: "IN MEMORIAM JOANNIS WALTERS EJUSQUE FILII GULIELMI WHITNEY", and above it the seal of the Seminary.

Detail of Wrought Iron Railing on Main Staircase

Detail of the Grille of the Chapel of St. Charles Borromeo, in the Crypt

The Ornamental Iron Work in the Crypt

In the crypt under the main chapel are twelve small chapels which are used by the professors for the daily sacrifice of Holy Mass. They are jewel-like in their beauty and each is screened from the wide corridor by an exquisitely wrought grille of iron. The designs of these grilles are varied and many of them bear emblems of the saints to whom the altars are dedicated.

The arrangement of the chapels is as follows: From the entrance, upon the left hand: The Chapel of St. Francis of Assisi; the Chapel of St. Thomas Aquinas; the Chapel of St. John, the Evangelist; the Chapel of St. Charles, Borromeo; the Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and the Chapel of St. Paul. Upon the opposite side of the corridor, from the farther end towards the entrance: The Chapel of St. Peter; the Chapel of Our Lady of Perpetual Help; the Chapel of St. Catherine of Alexandria; the Chapel of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and the Chapel of St. Dominick. These chapels were erected and adorned in memory of Catherine Bradley Murray, of Brooklyn, N. Y.

There are four great light standards, or candelabra, nine feet in height, of wrought iron ornamented in repoussé in the statio. They are of two different designs, to avoid monotony, but all four are of the same general appearance, to secure unity of effect. The hammered ornamentation is rich, bold and vigorous in design and execution. The four corners of the base bear the monogram of the Blessed Mother and in the intermediate medallions the mystic rose and the lilies alternate. Upon the four sides of the pedestal are represented four different flowers emblematic of the Blessed Mother, namely: the sunflower, the tulip, the anemone and the violet.

The Railings of the Main Staircase

Leading up to the main chapel from the entrance foyer of the building, is a broad flight of marble stairs the railings of which are masterpieces of craftsmanship in wrought iron. At either side stairs lead down to the crypt.

Indicative of the extraordinarily painstaking character of the workmanship is the fact that the balusters are forged from bars of the size required for the collars, one and one-half inches square, the collars being forged in the bars, not made separately and slipped on and riveted in place after the common practice. Between the collars, the bars were stretched down by hammering them upon the anvil while red hot, and twisted in an interesting manner. The designs of the collars and of the twisted portions are different in alternate balusters.

The newel posts of the stair railing are forged from bars of wrought iron two and one-half inches square, ornamented with sinkages worked in the iron and twisted.

Upon the top of each of these newel posts is a delicately wrought baldachino of iron which encloses a bronze figure of a praying angel, admirably modelled and expressive of the spirit of reverence in which the chapel should be approached.

All of the ornamentation of these railings is hand forged and welded together after the best age-old practice of craftsmanship in wrought iron.

Varied Works

The ornamental wrought iron executed for the Seminary by the Ferro Studio, Inc., comprises the following works: The great choral screen in the main chapel; the railings of the main stairway; the grilles of the twelve small chapels in statio; and the four candelabra (all described above), also the wrought iron doors and doorways at the ends of the east and west corridors leading to the loggias; the wrought iron railings and transom grilles in the basement foyer; the wrought iron pull-handles and the wrought ornaments that stud the heavily-

framed oak doors in the main entrance; the grilles at the sides of the entrance; the two grilles in the windows in the base of the small towers at the corners of the great central tower; and the six balcony railings upon the main front of the building. Also the wrought bronze cross and its base (nine feet in height) at the highest point upon the seminary building, was executed by this studio.

Craftsmanship in Wrought Iron

Wrought iron is so responsive and expressive a medium in the hands of a craftsman who possesses the artistic sense and a mastery of the material, that it is capable of enriching and beautifying buildings of all types to a remarkable degree. But it must be produced by a man who has a deep love for his craft, who takes pride in his work, and who is capable of sympathetic collaboration with the architect, if it is to attain its best expression.

Much must be left to the craftsman who interprets the architect's design in wrought iron, for it is only in this way that the work can be given the expressiveness, the vigor and the characteristics of line, form and texture that are peculiar to this material. The craftsman must be free, in a great measure, to work out the design in his own way—that, as we know, was the practice when the finest old examples of wrought iron were created, and it is the best practice today.

There are countless ways in which the craftsman can contribute to the success of the work. Observation has taught him, if he has made good use of his opportunities, how wrought iron work appears under different conditions, out of doors and indoors in relation to architectural detail, and many other things as well. Consequently, he should be able to judge in advance of execution whether the design is of the right weight and scale for its place, whether it is too open or too full in any part, whether it will read clearly from the greatest distance at which it will be seen and will be interesting at close range. These and other like questions arise in the study of designs and, usually, they cannot be settled to the best advantage in making the full-size detail drawings in the architect's drafting room—the fund of knowledge of such matters of detail that the able craftsman has gained through long experience in this particular field is an invaluable aid.

It is evident that if the craftsman is to collaborate helpfully with the architect, he must possess not only the requisite skill in working his material and a proper understanding of the relation of his work to architecture, but also a mastery of design and a cultivated artistic sense. If he is lacking in any of these respects he will be unable to preserve in his interpretation the spirit, beauty and refinement of the architect's design.

It is the possession of these qualifications in an unusual degree that has won for Frederick W. Bergmueller the esteem and patronage of many of the best architects. As head of the Ferro Studio, Inc., he gives his personal supervision to every detail of the work entrusted to his organization, from drafting and forging to finishing and erection. To all that he does he gives the best he has of earnestness, skill and artistry in wrought iron craftsmanship. In addition to ecclesiastical wrought iron work, such as that described here, the work of the Ferro Studio, Inc., includes banking screens, entrance gates, grilles, balcony railings, stair railings for business buildings, residences, public and semi-public buildings—in fact, the whole range of ornamental wrought iron work of an architectural character.

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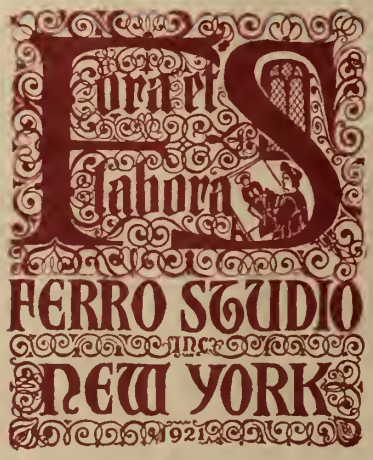
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